

From: Daniel Dreier
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/27/02 5:09am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

To Whom it May Concern,

I am a network administrator and software developer at Verinform, a medical database software company. As we use both Microsoft Windows and Linux operating system based computers, I have a number of concerns about the proposed United States vs. Microsoft settlement.

My primary concern is that the proposed settlement does not address the very significant issue of file format documentation and compatibility. The problem we face at Verinform is that Microsoft uses a proprietary and undocumented format for the popular Outlook email program, a component of the Microsoft Office application suite.

Our work requires that we maintain a task list of to-do items, and that multiple employees be able to share these lists. Microsoft's Outlook provides an excellent method of doing this. Since Microsoft does not make public the format in which "Task" list items are transmitted via email, we are forced to use Outlook on all of the desktop computers in the company which need to use the to-do list.

Microsoft does not produce Outlook for the Linux operating system platform. We must therefor use Microsoft Windows, a seperate and unrelated product, in order to use the to-do list.

If the settlement forced Microsoft to release to the public, to competitors, and to the Linux community the format in which Outlook transmits this information, then a competing product could be created for the Linux operating system. Without a competing product, Microsoft has no incentive to release Outlook for the Linux platform; to do so would weaken their stronghold on the Windows operating system monopoly.

I am also concerned about the issue of enforcement. Although the settlement provides for a committee with investivative powers, this committee has no enforcement powers. Microsoft has demonstrated in the past that they are willing to use a lawsuit as a delay during which to exploit a monopoly. For example, Microsoft was taken to court on the issue of having used monopolistic powers to unlawfully give their Internet Explorer product an advantage over Netscape's web browser. By the time that the lawsuit had finished, Microsoft's Internet Explorer had become the defacto standard on the consumer desktop. Regardless of the outcome of settlement, Internet Explorer will continue to be the leading web browser. There are no serious competitors.

Microsoft cannot be allowed to simply ignore decisions of the court, counting on the slow pace of the legal system and the appeals process to protect them. Although I would favor a breakup to force compliance, I understand that this is not generally considered to be a realistic measure to take. I feel that the currently proposed settlement will allow Microsoft to use loopholes to evade the intent of the settlement and simply ignore any elements of the settlements that cannot be otherwise evaded.

Sincerely,

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